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LOCAL WATER DONE WELL

Factsheet: National Engineering Design Standards

This is one of a series of factsheets giving an overview of key aspects of the Local Government (Water Services) Act 2025 and the associated Local Government (Water Services) (Repeals and Amendments) Act 2025.

It updates the Factsheet: *National Engineering Design Standards* shared in December 2024, to reflect changes made through the Parliamentary process.

Together, the Local Government (Water Services) Act 2025 (referred to as **the standalone Act** in this factsheet) and the Local Government (Water Services) (Repeals and Amendments) Act 2025 (referred to as **the Repeals and Amendments Act** in this factsheet) set out the enduring settings for the new water services system. They are the third tranche of legislation in the Government's three-stage process for implementing Local Water Done Well.

This factsheet provides an overview of National Engineering Design Standards (NEDS). It includes details about the scope and process for developing NEDS, and National Codes of Practice that can be used to demonstrate compliance with NEDS.

It should be read alongside other Local Water Done Well factsheets.

What does the legislation do?

The Repeals and Amendments Act inserts a new subpart 1AA into Part 3 of the Water Services Act 2021, providing the Water Services Authority – Taumata Arowai (the Authority) with new powers to develop NEDS.

What are the NEDS?

The NEDS will set performance-based requirements for the design, construction and operational performance of public water services network (reticulation) infrastructure. The Authority can also develop National Codes of Practice that can be used by councils, developers, and contractors to comply with the NEDS.

These matters are currently the subject of codes of practice developed by territorial and unitary authorities for their cities and districts, often given effect through resource management plans or local bylaws. There are approximately 45 different codes of practice in New Zealand that have varying requirements for similar aspects of water services infrastructure.

The NEDS are intended to support greater consistency and standardisation in the design, construction and operational performance of water services infrastructure across New Zealand. As well as achieving more consistent operational performance, standardisation will also support scale efficiencies in the design, specification, procurement, and supply chains for water services infrastructure to reduce costs for those looking to develop land and connect into publicly provided water services infrastructure.

Greater national consistency and standardisation is intended to:

- promote efficient and financially sustainable operation of water services networks;
- improve networks' reliability and resilience;
- protect public health and safety; and
- contribute to the continuous improvement of water services, which is one of the purposes of the Water Services Act 2021.

What will the NEDS cover?

The NEDS and their Codes of Practice can cover stormwater, drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. The NEDS will provide engineers, developers, and contractors working in the water service industry with mandatory shared engineering design standards across New Zealand. The key elements of the new approach are:

- The NEDS, which provide mandatory performance-based requirements (similar to the New Zealand building code) that need to be met by water service providers when they:
 - design and construct their water services network infrastructure; and
 - assess water services network infrastructure that developers and contractors propose to transfer to water service providers or connect to their water services networks.
- National Codes of Practice, that provide detailed specifications for the design and operation of water services infrastructure that if followed provide for compliance with the NEDS (like an acceptable solution in the building regulatory system). Compliance with any relevant National Code of Practice is not mandatory. A water service provider can approve alternative solutions in its service area, so long as compliance with the NEDS is still achieved.

Amongst other things, NEDS and National Codes of Practice may include requirements for:

- the design, construction and operation of water services infrastructure proposed to be transferred to a water service provider;
- how water services infrastructure is to be transferred (vested) and/or connected to a water service provider's water services network; and
- the sharing of information about the design, construction, and operational performance of infrastructure and processes.

Through alternative solutions, water services providers can continue to approve the “products” (e.g. pipes) used in water services networks in their service areas. However, the Authority can issue warnings in relation to a particular product or method that, if used in certain circumstances, would result in non-compliance with the NEDS.

How will the NEDS be implemented?

Once in place, the NEDS will apply to all new public water services network (reticulation) infrastructure, including privately constructed networks that are proposed to be transferred to water service providers or connected to the public network.

Water service providers will be responsible for compliance with the NEDS. They must ensure that:

- bylaws made under s 147 of the Local Government (Water Services) Act 2025 for the purpose of connections comply with the NEDS;
- they comply with the NEDS when constructing, renewing, or maintaining water services network infrastructure, except where compliance with the NEDS is not practicable or the works are of a minor or isolated nature; and
- they do not accept any applications from others, such as developers or contractors, to transfer ownership and operation of water services network infrastructure or connect to the public waters network, unless it complies with the NEDS.

As discussed above the Authority may also develop National Codes of Practice. The National Codes of Practice will, if followed, provide a “means for compliance” with the NEDS. The intention is that the NEDS and the respective National Codes of Practice will cover most of the common design and construction matters relating to networks.

While compliance with the NEDS is mandatory, water service providers or other persons are not required to use the National Codes of Practice. This enables water service providers to implement or approve (in the case of transfers or connections) alternative solutions to the National Codes of Practice, provided they comply with the NEDS.

Any bylaws made by water services providers for the purpose of regulating connections must comply with the NEDS. However, the NEDS do not override any other statutory regulatory requirements in relation to land development (such as RMA requirements), although they could support those consent processes by providing the national technical requirements for the planning, design, construction, and transfer of network infrastructure.

What does this mean for councils and consumers?

Benefits associated with NEDS are likely to include:

- nationally consistent technical and construction standards for network operators, the development industry and infrastructure suppliers;
- greater efficiencies and reduced costs for the design, approval, procurement, construction, maintenance and renewal of network infrastructure; and
- a common technical reference for the development of industry training and skills.

Next steps

The Authority is responsible for the development of the NEDS and the National Codes of Practice. When developing the NEDS, the Authority is required to consult with water service providers, industry bodies, the Commerce Commission (economic regulator of water services), and other relevant infrastructure agencies. The NEDS will ultimately be issued through regulations made under the Water Services Act 2021.

When NEDS are made the Authority will have powers to review them at any time to respond to industry demands, technology changes, or infrastructure resilience challenges.

Further information

The Local Government (Water Services) Act 2025 and the Local Government (Water Services) (Repeals and Amendments) Act 2025 are available at www.legislation.govt.nz.

Information about the NEDS will be available on the Water Services Authority's website at [Home | The Water Services Authority - Taumata Arowai](#)

For further information about Local Water Done Well, including guidance and information for councils, visit www.dia.govt.nz/Water-Services-Policy-and-Legislation

Questions? Contact waterservices@dia.govt.nz